

## RESOLUTION TO IMPROVE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES BY IMPLEMENTING A TRAFFIC LIGHT FOOD LABELING POLICY

**WHEREAS**, obesity continues to rise in the United States and is a leading cause of preventable death in Idaho, with 35% of adults being obese and 68.5% either overweight or obese<sup>1,2</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the USDA's 2010 Dietary Guidelines recommend limiting intakes of saturated fat, sodium, trans fat, cholesterol, and added sugars to manage and prevent obesity<sup>3</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, energy dense, nutrient deficient foods are vigorously marketed<sup>4,5</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, current food labels are often misunderstood and misused, particularly in the low-income, literacy, and numeracy households with as little as 10.5% of college students being able to use them correctly<sup>6,7,8</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, labels that are readily accessible and easy-to-understand best support healthy dietary decisions<sup>9,10</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, traffic light labels quickly reflect the overall healthfulness of an item and how frequently it should be consumed<sup>11</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the use of traffic light labels increase the purchasing of healthier items by 10%, while decreasing purchases of less healthy by 16.5%<sup>12,13</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, food labeling policy changes can be more cost effective than other obesity treatments<sup>14</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, changes to environment and public policy can affect healthy choices in overall populations<sup>15,16</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Idaho does not have a policy regarding promotion of healthy food choices using easy-to-understand food labels.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Idaho Association of Local Boards of Health supports and promotes healthy food choices by enacting a traffic light food labeling policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Flegal KM, Carroll MD, Kit BK, Ogden CL. Prevalence of obesity and trends in the distribution of body mass index among US adults, 1999-2010. *JAMA* 2012; 307: 491-497.

<sup>2</sup> Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. Overweight and Obesity in Idaho. Available at <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/IdahoPhysicalActivityandNutrition%28IPAN%29/Obesity/tabid/177/Default.aspx>. Accessed on January 30, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Agriculture and United States Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010. Available at [http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/sites/default/files/dietary\\_guidelines\\_for\\_americans/PolicyDoc.pdf](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/sites/default/files/dietary_guidelines_for_americans/PolicyDoc.pdf). Accessed January 2013.

<sup>4</sup> French SA, Story M, Jeffery RW. Environmental influences on eating and physical activity. *Annu Rev Public Health* 2001; 22: 309-335.

<sup>5</sup> Kant AK. Consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods by adult Americans: nutritional and health implications. The Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1988-1994. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2000; 72: 929-936.

<sup>6</sup> Pettigrew S, Pescud M. The salience of food labeling among low-income families with overweight children. *J Nutr Educ Behav* 2013; 45: 332-339.

<sup>7</sup> Huizinga MM, Carlisle AJ, Cavanaugh KL, Davis DL, Gregory RP, Schlundt DG et al. Literacy, numeracy, and portion-size estimation skills. *Am J Prev Med* 2009; 36: 324-328.

<sup>8</sup> Misra R. Knowledge, attitudes, and label use among college students. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2007; 107: 2130-2134.

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- <sup>9</sup> Graham DJ, Jeffery RW. Location, location, location: eye-tracking evidence that consumers preferentially view prominently positioned nutrition information. *J Am Diet Assoc* 2011; 111: 1704–1711.
- <sup>10</sup> Center for Science in the Public Interest. Food labeling chaos: the case for reform. Available at: [http://www.cspinet.org/new/pdf/food\\_labeling\\_chaos\\_report.pdf](http://www.cspinet.org/new/pdf/food_labeling_chaos_report.pdf). Accessed 12 July 2013.
- <sup>11</sup> Roberto CA, Bragg MA, Schwartz MB, Seamans MJ, Musicus A, Novak N et al. Facts up front versus traffic light food labels: a randomized controlled trial. *Am J Prev Med* 2012; 43: 134–141.
- <sup>12</sup> Thorndike AN, Sonnenberg L, Riis J, Barraclough S, Levy DE. A 2-phase labeling and choice architecture intervention to improve healthy food and beverage choices. *Am J Public Health* 2012; 102: 527–533.
- <sup>13</sup> Bleich SN, Herring BJ, Flagg DD, Gary-Webb TL. Reduction in purchases of sugar-sweetened beverages among low-income black adolescents after exposure to caloric information. *Am J Public Health* 2012; 102: 329–335.
- <sup>14</sup> Gortmaker SL, Swinburn BA, Levy D, Carter R, Mabry PL, Finegood DT et al. Changing the future of obesity: science, policy, and action. *Lancet* 2011; 378: 838–847.
- <sup>15</sup> Liu PJ, Widsom J, Roberto CA, Liu LJ, Ubel PA Using behavioral economics to design more effective food policies to address obesity. *Appl Econ Perspect Pol* 2013; e-pub ahead of print 2 October 2013; doi:10.1093/aep/ppt027.
- <sup>16</sup> Gortmaker SL, Swinburn BA, Levy D, Carter R, Mabry PL, Finegood DT et al. Changing the future of obesity: science, policy, and action. *Lancet* 2011; 378: 838–847.